

Understanding questions

By age five typically developing children are starting to develop their understanding of more abstract language and beginning to use verbal reasoning. The Blank Level model (Blank, Rose, & Berlin) has been used to explain the development of understanding.



Level 1 – Naming things

Level 2 – Describing things

Level 3 – Retelling events

Level 4 – Problem solving

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Level 1 – Naming Things (2-3 years)

The child is able to match language to what they can see and respond to requests such as;

- Point to the apple.
- Find another banana.
- What's this?

Level 2 – Describing things and answers; Who?, What? Where? type questions (3-4 years)

The child is able to match language to what they can see but moves to focus on specific details rather than the whole object. This level involves descriptive language talking about the colour, size, shape, texture (concepts) and understanding the function of an object. The child is responding to requests such as;

- Which one do you draw with? (function)
- You can throw a? (linking objects and actions)
- What goes together a bucket and a ...? (linking objects)
- Name a fruit? (categories).
- Find a big red crayon. (concepts).
- Respond to who, what, where questions.

More information

Level 3 – Retelling events and talking about stories (4-5 years)

The child is starting to develop links and generalisations between objects, sequencing events and can make simple predictions and deductions. They are starting to understand context and how somebody else may feel and that some words can mean similar things. The child is able to respond to requests such as:

- What will happen next? (prediction)
- How do you think he / she feels? (Empathy)
- What do you think they are saying? (assuming the role of another)
- How do you make a sandwich? (sequencing and giving directions)
- What does party mean? (defining words)

Level 4 – Justifying, problem solving and reasoning? (5-6 years)

The child is using their own experience to problem solve, make predictions, give explanations and solutions and think about past and future events. The child is able to respond to requests such as:

- What should they do now? (solution)
- What will happen if they? (prediction)
- What made that happen? (cause)
- Why can't we go to the park now the weather is bad? (justifying)
- How can you tell that man is angry? (explanation)
- How can you tell they are new shoes? (inference)

It is important to remember what Blank level a child is at when trying to manage their behaviour.

If a child is at level 3 then they will have difficulty responding to level 4 questions such as "Why did you do that?".

In these circumstances it would be better to ask level 3 questions such as "Tell me what happened."

